Purdue protests Bud Light’s ‘fan can’

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Not all Boilermaker fans are excited about a new black-and-gold beer can.

Purdue University officials have joined a coalition of colleges in calling for Anheuser-Busch InBev to stop selling its “fan can” -- a regular-size aluminum can of beer decked out in school colors.

Lafayette-area liquor stores and bars are now selling Bud Light in the cans mirroring Purdue’s black-and-gold colors.

“We feel like it implies that Purdue is associated with that certain type of product,” said Teri Lucie Thompson, Purdue’s vice president for marketing and media. “We have a sent a letter to ask them to cease and desist.”

So far, the beer maker has agreed to pull promotions near Texas A&M University, the University of Colorado and other college communities.

The “fan can” program puts school colors on Bud Light cans and was launched to coincide with the start of the college football season. Anheuser-Busch, which was bought by Belgium-based InBev last year, said the cans have no college logos, names or other identifiers -- just 27 color combinations.

The program is nationwide, where the brewer’s wholesalers choose to participate. The company estimates half of its wholesalers are participating.

Dan St. John, owner of the four Village Bottle Shoppes in West Lafayette, said he has been stocking the black-and-gold can for a few weeks.

The cans, which retail for $18.49 in a 24-can case, are selling a little better than the regular Bud Light cans, he said.

So far St. John has heard no complaints or been told by his distributor the promotion was over.

“I don’t see it being an issue with just the colors on the can,” he said. “If they used the logo, then it would be different.”
But Thompson said the cans are still an infringement on the Purdue’s brand and could be seen as promoting underage drinking -- a problem she said Purdue works hard to combat.

Brad Zimmerman, a Purdue senior, said he understands Purdue’s reasoning to kick the can.

“It is a very prestigious school,” he said. “They don’t want to be lumped in with a beer can.”

Purdue is one of more than two dozen colleges represented by Collegiate Licensing Co. that has sent the beer maker formal letters asking it to stop the program near their campuses, according to the company. Collegiate Licensing Co. represents some 200 colleges and universities on licensing and branding issues.

For now, the Bud Light “fan cans” are available around Purdue and the popularity is catching on.

Jake’s Roadhouse, a bar in the Chauncey Hill Mall, recently made an order from its distributor to start selling beer in the “fan can,” said manager Shannon Duda.

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